

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY MIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

DIA

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TAGS: PFOR, MARR, EG, US, UR, XF

SUBJECT: LOCAL PRESS TREATMENT OF SADAT'S "LE MONDE" INTERVIEW

REF: A. PARIS 1777 B. CAIRO 727

SUMMARY. REPORTING SADAT'S INTERVIEW WITH LE MONDE, CAIRO'S ARABIC LANGUAGE PRESS JAN 22 HIGHLIGHTS NECESSITY FOR SPEEDY ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, OMITTS MOST OF HARSH CRITICISM OF USSR, MAKES NO REFERENCE TO SADAT'S "READINESS SIGN PEACE ACCORD WITH ISRAEL" IN LOOSE CONTEXT REPORTED PARIS REFTEL, MAKES CLEAR THAT THREE FRONT WITHDRAWAL IN NEXT THREE MONTHS COULD BE CONSECUTIVE AND NOT NECESSARILY SIMULTANEOUS, AND NOTES SADAT'S DENUNCIATION OF USG "GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY" AND HIS ASSERTION THAT ARABS DO NOT INTEND "STRANGLE" WESTERN ECONOMY. FOR FIRST TIME, SADAT

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GAVE FIGURE FOR GOE PAYMENT TO DATE FOR SOVIET ARMS (L.E.

80 MILLION). END SUMMARY.

1. CAIRO PRESS TREATMENT OF SADAT'S LE MONDE INTERVIEW, WHICH WAS CONDUCTED JAN 20, DAY PRIOR AMBASSADOR EILTS' ARRIVAL IN ASWAN, IS SELECTIVE. ARABIC LANGUAGE PAPERS CARRY SIMILAR ABBREVIATED TEXTS, HIGHLIGHTING COMMENTS ON NECESSITY OF SPEEDY ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL AND, SIGNIFICANTLY, DROPPING MOST OF THE PRESIDENT'S HARSH WORDS ABOUT USSR.

2. THE THREE ARABIC LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS QUOTE SADAT AS MAKING ONLY TWO MAIN POINTS ABOUT GOE/USSR RELATIONS:

A) AT VLADIVOSTOK USG AND USSR DISAGREED ON A STEP-BY-STEP VS. GENEVA APPROACHES. GOE SEES NO CONTRADICTIONS IN TWO APPROACHES AND WILL CONTINUE ENDEAVOR RECOVER PART OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND GO TO GENEVA WHEN IT IS POSSIBLE TO REACH COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT. (COMMENT: THIS IS STANDARD GOE LINE).

B) ASKED ABOUT INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES, SADAT SAID USG AND USSR ARE READY TO OFFER SUCH GUARANTEES TO ARAB STATES AND ISRAEL; GUARANTEES WOULD BE CONFIRMED BY OTHER UNSC MEMBERS.

3. ONLY ENGLISH LANGUAGE EGYPTIAN GAZETTE AND FRENCH LANGUAGE JOURNAL D'EGYPTE, WHOSE CIRCULATION VIRTUALLY LIMITED TO EGYPT'S EXPATRIATE COMMUNITY, CARRY SECTION OF INTERVIEW WHICH INCLUDES HARSHEST PUBLIC CRITICISM OF USSR BY ANY GOE OFFICIAL SINCE OCTOBER WAR:

A) ASKED IF HE MIGHT ABROGATE SOVIET/EGYPTIAN FRIENDSHIP TREATY, SADAT REPORTEDLY SAID: "I CANNOT EXCLUDE SUCH A POSSIBILITY, BUT IT IS DIFFICULT TO TAKE DECISION THAT COULD WORK AGAINST INTEREST OF EGYPT AND ARAB WORLD... HOWEVER, MY PATIENCE IS LIMITED AND MY DUTY IS TO ASSURE DEFENSE OF MY COUNTRY BY ALL MEANS AVAILABLE."

B) KREMLIN HAS BEEN DEAF TO REQUEST FOR TEN YEAR GRACE PERIOD ON PAYMENTS FOR ARMS SUPPLY, INSISTING ON 80 MILLION EGYPTIAN POUNDS FOR PARTIAL DELIVERY ARMS AND TECHNOLOGICAL GOODS. HINTING AT HIS IRRITATION AT SOVIET DISCRIMINATION, HE STRESSED SOVIETS HAD CONSENTED TO SARG'S REQUEST FOR GRACE PERIOD. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COMMENT: WE BELIEVE THIS IS FIRST TIME SADAT HAS PLACED FIGURE (I.E. 80 MILLION) ON GOE PAYMENTS TO DATE FOR SOVIET ARMS. WE ARE INTERESTED, TOO, IN AFP REPORT FROM BEIRUT THAT SADAT ALLEGEDLY TOLD LEBANESE POLITICIAN KAMAL JUMBLATT LAST WEEK THAT EGYPT'S MILITARY DEBT TO USSR NOW TOTALS SIX BILLION DOLLARS-- FBIS TA 211158.)

C) PRESIDENT REPORTEDLY "EXPRESSED DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT WITH SOVIET COOPERATION".

4. ARABIC PRESS DOES NOT RPT NOT REPORT SADAT'S REMARK THAT HE IS "PREPARED TO CONCLUDE PEACE ACCORD WITH ISRAEL"(PARIS REFTTEL, PARA 16). LOCAL PAPERS SAY HE PREFERENCES A "PEACEFUL SOLUTION" TO WAR. IF ISRAEL RECOGNIZES IMPOSSIBILITY OF IMPOSING SOLUTION BY FORCE, THEN IT WILL BE EASY TO REACH A "PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT". ONLY GUMHURIYYA USES WORD WHICH COULD BE TRANSLATED AS "ACCORD", THOUGH NOT AS "TREATY": WE SHALL GO TO GENEVA WHEN COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION BECOMES FEASIBLE; "SHEN SUCH AN ACCORD (ARABIC: ITTIFAQ) IS SIGNED, WE SHALL RESPECT ALL RESULTING COMMITMENTS."

5. OTHER SIGNIFICANT POINTS FROM INTERVIEW AS CARRIED BY CAIRO PRESS ARE:

A) ORLY INCIDENT. ORLY ATTACK WAS "AIMED AT ME" AND WAS EFFORT TO SABOTAGE GOOD RELATIONS BETWEEN PARIS AND ARAB WORLD. SADAT SAID HE REFUSED TO PERMIT GUNMEN TO LAND IN EGYPT. "IN PAST I HAVE GRANTED ASYLUM TO SEVERAL TERRORIST GROUPS. NOW IT IS FINISHED. I DO NOT WANT THEM. THEY ARE CRIMINALS."

(COMMENT: FEDAYEEN WHOM GOE FINDS UNAPPETIZING HAVE IN PAST BEEN CALLED GUNMEN AND TERRORISTS. NEVER BEFORE HAVE THEY BEEN LABELLED CRIMINALS. SADAT IS CLEARLY FED UP.)

B) AMERICAN "THREATS". AS IN HIS AL-BAYRAQ INTERVIEW (CARIO 341 OF JAN 10), SADAT DENOUNCED "A RECENT COMMENT BY SECRETARY KISSINGER TO EFFECT THAT US COULD NOT RULE OUT USE OF FORCE IN ME IN DIRE OIL EMERGENCY". THIS IS "19TH CENTURY GUNBOAT DIPLOMACY". HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT ARABS HAVE NO INTENTION OF STRANGLING ECONOMICS OF WESTERN NATIONS. ASKED IF OIL MIGHT BE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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USED AS WEAPON OF REPRISAL, HE SAID: "IT WOULD BE ABSURD TO IMPOSE SANCTIONS AGAINST COUNTRIES LIKE FRANCE WHICH TAKE OBJECTIVE VIEW OF ARAB/ISRAELI CONFLICT. IN ANY CASE, WE WOULD BE REASONABLE AS AT TIME OF OCTOBER WAR. WE HAVE NO INTENTION OF STRANGLING WESTERN ECONOMY, CONTRARY TO WHAT THE AMERICAN LEADERS CLAIM." AS IN PREVIOUS INTERVIEWS, HOWEVER, SADAT FOLLOWED THIS DENUNCIATION OF USG "THREATS" BY HIS USUAL WARM EXPRESSION OF FAITH IN SECRETARY KISSINGER'S SHREWDNESS, MODERATION, AND HONESTY.

C) ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. IN NAHAR INTERVIEW (CARIO 570 OF JAN 17), PRESIDENT WAS NOT CLEAR ON WHETHER HE DEMANDS SIMULTANEITY ON WITHDRAWAL ON ALL THREE FRONTS WITHIN THREE MONTHS. THIS TIME HE IS UNMISTAKABLY CLEAR. THERE MUST BE THREE-FRONT WITHDRAWAL WITHIN THREE MONTHS, BUT "CONSECUTIVE STAGES" ARE

ACCEPTABLE. (COMMENT: THIS WILL, OF COURSE, FEED PALESTINIAN
AND SYRIAN APPREHENSIONS THAT SEPARATE PEACE IS IN THE MAKING.)
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